

II.—*Extracts from a few rough Notes of a Journey across the Pampas of Buenos Ayres to Tucuman, in 1835.* By Mr. JAMES TWEEDIE, addressed to Sir W. J. Hooker.

IN reply to the inquiry contained in your last letter, as to whether I kept a journal of my late excursion to the interior, of which, if such be the case, you desire a copy, I beg to state that it is certainly my custom to take a few notes of whatever may particularly strike me as singular and worthy of remark, but that I am far from pretending to describe in a minute or scientific manner; although

In wilds unknown I love to stroll,
Where virgin plants their flowers unfold,
Where unknown warblers tune their song,
And unnamed rivers glide along.

Of my journey to the Andes of Tucuman, I now therefore send you a few notes, which had been hastily written while crossing the Pampas. My object in troubling you with them is merely to show the causes of that poverty in my botanical collections of which you complain.

On the 2nd of March our Tropa left Buenos Ayres: it consisted of seventeen waggons, each of which, together with its cargo, was computed to weigh about three tons, and was drawn by six bullocks. The body of the waggon is built of sticks and straw, and is arched over the top where it is covered with raw hides: the length is about 15 feet, the breadth 5, and the height $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet inside. Each wheel has a diameter of 8 feet. Thus when these unwieldy, uncouth-looking vehicles are set in motion, you might imagine that a village of Indian huts or toldas had suddenly taken a mind to walk, and the whole appearance is as curious as can well be imagined.

The tropa, on this occasion, consisted, besides the waggons, of 240 cattle, 44 horses, 35 mules, and 32 persons, including passengers. Well knowing by experience the lagging mode of travelling that prevails in this country, I allowed the party to have four days' start of me, and came up with them at the village of Morros, about five leagues distant from Buenos Ayres. Thus my future companions had performed rather more than a league per day. At the moment when I arrived

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the tropa was preparing to cross an Arroy, where meeting two other tropas on their way to Buenos Ayres, we made a very grand appearance from the union of such a large number of cattle, &c., and six hours of time were lost before we again resumed our road. Morros is a small straggling village with a population of from 400 to 500 persons, and a respectable looking little church: excellent wheat, maize, and pumpions are raised in this neighbourhood, these being the chief articles of produce to which the farmer directs his attention.

While passing the Arroy I spent some of the leisure time which was thus afforded me in examining its marshy sides, in search of any new or rare plants, and my disappointment in this first attempt proved but too true an omen of the slender share of success which attended my journey. The tropa had hardly resumed its march on a good road, when they proceeded at the rate of about two miles an hour, than the approach of sunset warned them to halt for the night, and then the whole party dispersed to gather dry thistles, withered straw and herbage, or any material with which a fire can be lighted to cook their victuals. This process is very quickly and summarily performed; often have I seen the animal on foot helping to draw the waggon, and killed, flayed, roasted and swallowed in less than two hours! Dry grass is often the only fuel that can be procured: the men divide into parties, four to each mess; the portion of beef is handed to them; and they generally cook it by sticking it on an iron rod which they fix in the ground and lean over the smoky fire. Then each individual pulls off his singed and bloody portion, severing it partly with his knife and partly with his greased and gory fingers; and with unwashed hands and filthy beard, enjoys his half-raw meal, devoured without bread, vegetables or salt, in as much comfort and with greater health than does the London epicure his highly seasoned and varied feast.

Many of the people who accompany these tropas have been born in them and know no other home than a cart or waggon, nor can do anything save driving and tormenting the poor animals committed to their charge; he being esteemed the cleverest fellow who can make his bullocks cry loudest with the tortures he inflicts. It cannot be wondered at that they

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are a very ignorant, thievish and deceitful set of savages. The traveller requires to be constantly on the look-out or his property will be stolen : if he has carried anything to eat or drink and does not share it with these ruffians, they abuse him, call him a bad Christian, and take it away ; nay, murders are frequently committed and gloried in under these circumstances : and such were the people with whom I was once for seven months, the only stranger save one Frenchman !

Early on the 6th of March we crossed the river *de las Conchas*, twenty-one miles from Buenos Ayres, on an old, rickety, dangerous wooden bridge, the only bridge of any description that we met with in a journey of nearly 1200 miles. The care that was taken to prevent accidents consumed three hours in passing it, immediately after which we entered a grassy plain, diversified by no change of scenery, except a forest of tall thistles (*Carduus marianus*) six to ten feet high, mingled with a coarse species of *Erigeron*. At mid-day we halted and were here joined by a large carriage conveying the family of the owner of the waggons and his servants.

While stopping here I strolled a little way and found the first specimen worth gathering, it was an *Eupatorium*, with broad cordate leaves and tricoloured flowers, which I had however seen before at the Rio Negro, Banda Oriental.

7th. This day we performed the extraordinary distance of five leagues, all the way being over a grassy plain, where no water could be had, except at one solitary Rancho, where they gave us some excellent water, drawn from a depth of only 11 feet below the surface. I took the opportunity of ascertaining the depth of all the wells (which are however few in number) that we saw, and found that by digging about 20 feet at most, an abundance of fine water can always be procured. So lazy are the people, however, that they generally prefer using what they can obtain from some filthy stagnant pool, to taking the trouble of sinking a well ; one hindrance, however exists in the want of materials for cradling such pits, as they have nothing for the purpose but bones. At night we were deprived of sleep by the clouds of mosquitoes which issued from a stinking marsh close to which we had encamped.

8th. Four hours were occupied this morning in crossing

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Corn is not carried to market here in sacks, but four hides are loosely attached by their corners to the inside of the huge hurdle-cart already described, thus forming a kind of open box, into which the grain or any other cargo is flung.

At sunset, having been travelling over a grassy and somewhat undulating country, we arrived at the village of Lujan (pronounced Leuchan) lying in a sort of flat valley. Our first view of it from an elevated ridge was very prepossessing: its straggling roofs and whitened church, mingled with fig trees, and lighted by the setting sun, gave me the idea of a neat English village; but a nearer approach dispelled this favourable appearance. We found it a poor miserable place, chiefly consisting of mud-built, straw-covered Ranchos; a few tolerable brick dwellings formed a kind of square in the centre and outside them were ranged several wretched huts, without gardens or any appearance of cultivated ground, except some small peach clumps, which are kept to be cut every two or three years for fuel. The peach trees here are as plentiful as osiers in England, and may generally be seen growing along with the *Agave Americana* and the seven-angled Cactus. A considerable quantity of good wheat and maize is raised in this district for the Buenos Ayres market: the pieces of ground thus occupied being unfenced are preserved from the intrusions of cattle by having a lion or tiger tethered in the centre; the smell of which deters any cattle from approaching. (What is here called a lion, is probably the American lion or puma.)

9th. Leaving Lujan at midnight, we passed the Guardia de Lujan, three miles on our left, where are the head quarters

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At sunset, having been travelling over a grassy and somewhat undulating country, we arrived at the village of Lujan (pronounced Leuchan) lying in a sort of flat valley. Our first view of it from an elevated ridge was very prepossessing: its straggling roofs and whitened church, mingled with fig trees, and lighted by the setting sun, gave me the idea of a neat English village; but a nearer approach dispelled this favourable appearance. We found it a poor miserable place, chiefly consisting of mud-built, straw-covered Ranchos; a few tolerable brick dwellings formed a kind of square in the centre and outside them were ranged several wretched huts, without gardens or any appearance of cultivated ground, except some small peach clumps, which are kept to be cut every two or three years for fuel. The peach trees here are as plentiful as osiers in England, and may generally be seen growing along with the *Agave Americana* and the seven-angled Cactus. A considerable quantity of good wheat and maize is raised in this district for the Buenos Ayres market: the pieces of ground thus occupied being unfenced are preserved from the intrusions of cattle by having a lion or tiger tethered in the centre; the smell of which deters any cattle from approaching. (What is here called a lion, is probably the American lion or puma.)

9th. Leaving Lujan at midnight, we passed the Guardia de Lujan, three miles on our left, where are the head quarters

of the Argentine cavalry : here the country is chiefly occupied in keeping and breeding horses for the army, being clothed with rich grass and abounding in good water.

10th. Having travelled most of the night, and up to eleven o'clock in the forenoon, except resting two hours at sun-rise, we halted about noon when the sun was very warm, and turned out the cattle to feed in a fine and rich, though rather coarse, grassy meadow. Except two species of grass I added nothing to my specimen-book, the vegetation being similar to that of Buenos Ayres. Water was scarce and bad ; near one Rancho we unexpectedly found a sunken well, but nothing to draw withal, except a large horn which had many ups and downs before our thirst was satisfied ; there was only eight feet of depth before we came to the water, but the well being lined with shank-bones gives the water a very bad taste.

11th. This day's travelling was slow and fatiguing, owing to the scorching unclouded sun ; but we made up the difference by pushing onwards during the night, when we came to good roads, for the most of the daylight had been consumed in passing a bog of soft mud. To each cart the united force of nine or ten pairs of bullocks had to be applied to pull it through this bog which is only three-fourths of a mile wide. The whole day being thus spent, I took the opportunity of examining the vegetation of this neighbourhood, but only found two Syngenesious species that were new to me.

12th. Early this morning we came to another soft marsh with a slow river winding through it : the current did not flow faster than half a mile an hour. This river is called the *Arroya del Pez*, or Fish River, a name generally applied to distinguish such streams as do not dry up in summer from those which disappear at that period, although there may be no fish in either. Great caution was necessary in crossing this place, as the heads of the shaft bullocks were often drawn under water by the weight of the waggon. So long was the line of cattle, that often the foremost animals were already across before the cart had entered the water. When the traces break, as not unfrequently happens, the poor beasts are drowned.

13th. We rested during most of the hot afternoon of yesterday, and travelled all night through a rough trackless plain,

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and stopped in sight of the small village of Salto Chico, which we reached in the afternoon. This was another straggling assemblage of *Ronchos*, their walls of unburnt bricks, but the church with its whitewashed spire looked rather respectable; for here, as in all countries where the Romish pontiff holds sway, be the morals of the people as depraved as they may, the outward appearance of the church is the first consideration. For instance, at San Lorenzo on the Poran, a village of but five miserable huts, the church is one of the most splendid buildings in the whole Argentine Republic. The population of Salto Chico is about 1500: the place is noted for sending a great number of cheeses to Buenos Ayres, which are however but very poor eating, and fetch a current dollar, fivepence each, weighing about 2 lbs. A small river passes the village: the water is very brackish and bad, but we obtained a supply of what was good from wells, about fifteen feet deep to the bottom.

14th. Having again travelled most of the night, we found ourselves in the morning traversing a dreary houseless plain country, covered however with cattle and sheep. Rain came on in the evening, accompanied with thunder and vivid continued flashes of lightning; these, however, caused no alarm to the inhabitants as they would have done in a metallic country: for though storms of lightning are much more frequent and violent here than in England, they are never known to do any injury.

15th. We entered another poor village, called Pergamena, with a population of about 2000. Here we quitted the province of Buenos Ayres and therefore found it needful to lay in a stock of pumpions and some bread; the latter was with difficulty procured, being considered a luxury in this neighbourhood. We are now 120 miles from Buenos Ayres, and I have found but seven specimens of plants.

16th. At the Arroya del Medio, which divides the province of Buenos Ayres from that of Santa Fè, we were joined by 100 fresh draught bullocks, as we now enter uninhabited Pampas, occupied only by wandering Indians, and it is most desirable to pass through this country as quickly as possible lest the Indians should have time to collect and attack us for

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the sake of plunder. We therefore travelled night and day, making only very short stoppages to change the cattle and singe our beef, cooking being out of the question, where no fuel could be procured except dry grass, and when it was unadvisable to make any delay. We however saw nothing in these vast plains but three Tropas on their way to Buenos Ayres, at considerable distances from us. On these wide and open tracts an assemblage of fifty waggons only looks like a few ships scattered on the vast ocean, steering their way, as by compass, through the trackless wastes. Even the wild animals, as Foxes, Polecats, and Becatchos, abundant in more inhabited districts, are not to be seen in this desert: some grey and black vultures only attended our Tropa, which picked up any offal that came in their way. Here while stopping, during the passage of the Arroya called Del Indio-muerto, I saw great quantities of a large species of quail, generally called the pheasant of the country, probably attracted to this spot by the fine and large species of grass, with eatable seeds, which grow in the Arroya. On the 22nd of March, which was a clear calm sunny day, we noticed vast flocks of swallows, flying in a direction contrary to our course, which was north-west, at a great height from the ground; probably on their way to the warm islands of the Pacific Oceans. These birds generally quit Buenos Ayres in the beginning of April and return thither late in September. Only one kind of swallow is found in this country: it is large, and with more grey on the back than the house swallow of Britain, builds its nest under tiles and in holes of walls, and has a strong melodious note much resembling that of a rising lark.

24th. Having travelled for the last seven days and nights through a continued flat grassy plain, where nothing but bitter and brackish water could be had, we stopped at sunrise to let the poor exhausted cattle eat the damp though withered grass, and at nine in the morning reached Guardia del Equina, a poor village of thirty-two Ranchos. Here are some old mud forts, whence the cannon have however been removed; this military establishment, which was built by the old Spaniards to awe the Indians, is now given up. We rested all night at this place to repair our carts, and sent back about 100 of the

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most worn-out bullocks. While these affairs were proceeding I examined the vegetation, but as the ground is dry and saline I only found a paniculated Syngenesious shrub, and a species of *Hordeum*. Round the old forts, where the ground has been broken up, the land is covered with the common Horehound and Fennel: these plants, which are inseparable companions, always occur in great abundance in similar spots, springing up wherever the original soil has been disturbed.

25th. Having now passed that part of the road which is considered the most dangerous from the attacks of Indians, we halted for six hours, but as it was by the side of a horribly stinking marsh, the clouds of mosquitoes prevented our getting any sleep. Most of the day was spent in crossing the bog, during which time I had the gratification of gathering a very beautiful kind of *Digitalis*, with crisped linear leaves. We then changed the draught beasts and resumed our journey on a fine dry ground, which, gradually rising, brought us to the summit of the highest ridge we had yet passed. From the summit we had before us one of the finest and most welcome views that could be imagined. Hitherto we had been travelling over a lonely desert, bare of everything but grass of a foxy-brown colour; but now our eyes were suddenly gladdened with a delightfully fresh verdure; a beautiful serpentine river, the Corcouñeon, slowly winding its course through richly wooded land, adorned with lakes of clear looking water. Several of the fields have the appearance of being cultivated with wheat and maize; this is owing to the fresh grass springing up after the process of burning the ground. A little before sunset we came to a beautiful piece of water where I had the comfort of getting myself thoroughly washed;—no small refreshment, after travelling for three weeks through clouds of dust. Here I found a curious *Eryngium*, smelling strongly like *Angelica*, and a species of *Eupatorium* with fine tufts of peach-coloured flowers.

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most worn-out bullocks. While these affairs were proceeding I examined the vegetation, but as the ground is dry and saline I only found a paniculated Syngenesious shrub, and a species of *Hordeum*. Round the old forts, where the ground has been broken up, the land is covered with the common Horehound and Fennel: these plants, which are inseparable companions, always occur in great abundance in similar spots, springing up wherever the original soil has been disturbed.

25th. Having now passed that part of the road which is considered the most dangerous from the attacks of Indians, we halted for six hours, but as it was by the side of a horribly stinking marsh, the clouds of mosquitoes prevented our getting any sleep. Most of the day was spent in crossing the bog, during which time I had the gratification of gathering a very beautiful kind of *Digitalis*, with crisped linear leaves. We then changed the draught beasts and resumed our journey on a fine dry ground, which, gradually rising, brought us to the summit of the highest ridge we had yet passed. From the summit we had before us one of the finest and most welcome views that could be imagined. Hitherto we had been travelling over a lonely desert, bare of everything but grass of a foxy-brown colour; but now our eyes were suddenly gladdened with a delightfully fresh verdure; a beautiful serpentine river, the Corcouñeon, slowly winding its course through richly wooded land, adorned with lakes of clear looking water. Several of the fields have the appearance of being cultivated with wheat and maize; this is owing to the fresh grass springing up after the process of burning the ground. A little before sunset we came to a beautiful piece of water where I had the comfort of getting myself thoroughly washed;—no small refreshment, after travelling for three weeks through clouds of dust. Here I found a curious *Eryngium*, smelling strongly like *Angelica*, and a species of *Eupatorium* with fine tufts of peach-coloured flowers.

[To be continued.]